



The Amherst-Regional Public Schools
English Language Education Program Newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 2 November-December 2008

Let America Be America Again

by Langston Hughes

(FRAGMENTS – please google: “World Changing -- A poem for Election Day” and you will find the entire poem)

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed--
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(.....)

From the Editor:

As the winter season is slowly but surely approaching, with the leaves mostly gone off the trees by now, we are full of gratitude for the historic election and hopeful that we, as a community and nation, will take care of each other better. This cold season does not have to mean a lack of creativity or hope or joy in our lives. We are humbled by the amazing dedication of each and every one in our community to keep our mission, like a mighty vessel, not only afloat, but sailing strongly and with a purpose. How can we dream of doing this with the potential budget cuts and many other obstacles (stress, poverty, sickness, alienation, etc.) that beseech many of us each and every day? We can do it perhaps by keeping our intentions focused and clear, our actions thoughtful and collaborative, and our hearts open yet strong.

Renata S. Pienkawa



This second ELE Program Newsletter is dedicated to all the children



and their families in our school system. “

From the Desk of the Director:

Three days before Halloween, two mothers, both newly arrived to Amherst this past summer, called to ask about how to get their children ready for Halloween celebrations at their schools. The mothers, who struggle with English, had met me at a meeting, knew I spoke Spanish and thought I could help them. It was great to receive their call and I enjoyed trying to interpret this “holiday” for them. Between both families, they have children in two elementary schools, the MS and HS and all of them had brought home information that implied the need to spend money they didn’t have. How their children would be viewed by their peers, teachers and other school members if they didn’t do “the right thing” was at the core of the families’ questions. “Do our kids need to dress up a “certain way” on Friday? Do all schools celebrate this day? Do we really have to bake? Will our kids be ridiculed if they don't have a costume? We don't have enough money to buy costumes for all of our kids..., etc.”

I was glad to receive this call and even happier to be able to offer my understanding of what happens in our schools during this day. I e-mailed all of the principals in our district to verify that what I had shared with these mothers was correct and was able to confirm it was. The exchange with the mothers was a clear reminder of the need for all of us to be sensitive to the realities our families experience daily that directly affect the way our students perceive their

world and learn. As a teacher, I had to deal with the economic status, mental and physical health issues, language and level of literacy/advocacy skills of my students' families. During the years I worked in poor, urban schools, this was part of my daily lesson planning and what informed how I taught. As our economy continues to dissolve and our families are faced with harder choices, we must re-look at our practice so we can teach every one of our students in the most effective way, everyday.

Thanks for the work you do to make sense of all of this, support all families and continue to be the great child advocates you are!

Dr. Marta Guevara

ELE Program Director

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication...

Thanks to Mr. Mark Moriarty and his student, Isaac, for their hard work on our website and newsletter.

Thank you, Wildwood, for your beautiful contributions to this Newsletter...

ELE News at Wildwood

Wildwood ELL children have now settled into their classroom routines, made new friends and are working diligently on their English Language Arts skills. We have 40 students in grades K-6 who come from a variety of countries including China, Tibet, Vietnam, Japan, Korea, Israel, Yemen, El Salvador, France, Lebanon, Turkey and Georgia. The ELL staff at Wildwood is committed to helping children and their families make the smoothest transition possible to their new home and to be fully integrated into the daily life of the Wildwood School community.

Wildwood is currently celebrating Deepavali/Diwali, an Indian festival of light. This celebration kicks off a year long, school wide theme of light. This theme will allow all of our students to take pride in and to share the richness of their cultural heritage and the ways that their families include light in their celebrations.

The ELL program at Wildwood includes English as a New Language instruction (ESL) along with support for learning grade level math, social studies and science through Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) instruction. We are the host school for SEI with Chinese language clarification. Our Chinese bilingual/bicultural SEI staff also contributes to the cultural richness of Wildwood's all-school World Language Chinese Program.

Cheng Hue Lin and Zhaorong Liu were math/science educators in their native countries of Taiwan and China respectively and are now U.S. citizens. They collaborate with classroom teachers in implementing Investigations, the district math curriculum, as well as making sure that our science and social studies curricula are accessible to English Language Learners. They also provide parent outreach and translation for our Chinese speaking parents.

Our ELE staff include Rebecca Keenan, Carol Kim, and Jane Costello. All of us have lived in other countries and have experienced what it feels like to be immersed in learning a new language and adjusting to an unfamiliar culture. We all teach several grade levels and children who are beginning, intermediate and advanced English Language Learners.

Carol Kim teaches the upper grade beginners and has children actively engaged in talking, reading and writing about the pet hamster Biby. This study fits well with the beginning literacy series that they are reading titled Brown Mouse. Carol is fluent in Chinese and Korean, which is a great asset to teaching beginners from those countries. She also supports intermediate level 3rd and 5th grade students with learning effective reading comprehension strategies and new vocabulary.

As the school adopts the Lucy Calkins Teachers' College writing curriculum, Jane Costello and Rebecca Keenan work closely with classroom teachers to make sure these lessons are accessible and meaningful for English Language Learners. Jane, an active member of the Western Mass Writing Project, was a member of the district's writing curriculum task force. She is very excited to be participating in the upcoming, on site, staff development that will be offered by

writing instruction coaches from Teachers College. Jane teaches writing in grades 2, 3, 4, and 6.

Rebecca Keenan delights in the process of early literacy and works closely with the kindergarten and first grade teachers. She worked on the Lucy Calkin's non-fiction/expository writing unit this summer and looks forward to offering a staff development workshop to primary teachers this winter.

Also, we are in the midst of administering state mandated testing for ELLS. During the week of October 20th, all third grade ELL students and any new students in grades 3-6 take the MEPA (Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment) test. These scores will provide us with a baseline score and one way to look at student literacy progress when we compare their fall and spring scores. New students' skills in speaking and listening will also be assessed using an observational matrix called the MELA-O. In addition to these state assessments ELL staff use ongoing observations and analysis of student work to monitor progress and to target instruction toward maximum success for our students.

Our ELL students are truly an inspiration for the entire school community through their ability to do the extra work of learning a new language and adjusting to a new culture while they maintain and sometimes exceed grade level work in all other curriculum areas.

Our Students' Work (Wildwood)

I Am From

By Lucy

I am from the dumplings
That me and my family
make every two - three weeks.

I am from the computer files
And albums of pictures of my
Best friend or just friends, also family.
They may be sad, funny or happy moments .
So many memories.

I am from the dogs barking

In my neighborhood to the loud
trucks and cars on the street
and the bicycle riders.

I am from the cool wind on my face
and the clotheslines to
the flowers in my yard and
the sweet and sour grapes
that bloom every year in September.

I am from China, Shanghai,
Canada, Victoria, or as some people call it,
Vancouver Island and the United States, Amherst.
I am from my friends here and there.

I Am From

Junya

I am from my soccer ball and soccer net in my backyard.

I am from math, especially multiplication.

I am from catching bugs with hands and a net.

I am from giant dragon flies and thin snakes that are colorful.

I am from my book about sports and bugs.

I am from putting the star on the top of the Christmas tree.

I am from petting my neighbor's cats.

I am from my little brother Ayato who punches me.

I am from Japan and Germany and sushi and tempura.

I am from playing out side with my friends.

I am from my mom's folder that is full with pictures of family memories.







There are so many special days each month.

Enjoy each "regular" day. Enjoy your special days.

WISHING ALL OF US MUCH PEACE

as well as a Happy and Healthy New Year 2009!



REMINDERS -- Upcoming Meetings and Trainings:

Tutor Meetings – Wednesdays -- 2:30-3:30 at the Professional Development Center, Middle School

Oct. 22
Nov. 19
Dec. 10
Jan. 14
Feb. 11
March 18
April 8
May 13
June 10 (make-up date)

SEI Category II Trainings --Fridays -- 8:00-3:00pm

Category II -- PDC, Middle School

- a. Secondary (7-12) Dates: Oct. 10, Dec. 19. Feb. 6, April 13* (notice the change of this last date from April 10).**
- b. Elementary (PreK-6) Dates: Oct. 24, Nov. 7, Nov. 14, Dec.5**

Category IV (pending approval)

a. Secondary (7-12) Dates: Jan. 9, Feb. 27, May 15.

b. Elementary (PreK-6) Dates: March 27, April 17, May 1.

ELE Program Staff Meeting – Hours to be determined

January 23, 2009 Wildwood School

March 13, 2009 PDC, Middle School

Please e-mail Renata Pienkawa with any concerns or questions: pienkawar@arps.org